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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the trends in community college education and the societal and demographic changes that are influencing these trends. School enrollments have been increasing in recent years due to the flood of incoming children from baby boomers and immigrant minorities, as well as from students who are staying in school longer. These enrollment increases result in overcrowding, lack of funds, and a shortage of qualified faculty. It is predicted that more adults will return to college to improve their employment skills, and the numbers of new college enrollments from high school graduates will increase dramatically. Recent demographics also have determined that over the next ten years, high turnover rate and governmental support in higher education will provide many teaching opportunities, but most of these will be adjunct positions, with fields such as science, math, and computers in greater demand than English and history. This narrow window of opportunity will be open for those who wish to teach at community colleges during the next decade, but afterward, positions will be fewer. (YKH)

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Trends in Community College Education: A Window of Opportunity

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TRENDS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION: A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

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In education as indeed in most human endeavors it is perhaps foolish to look too far ahead. Too many things can and do change. We can not accurately predict what might happen twenty-five years from now.

But, on the other hand, it is perhaps also foolish not to look ahead at all. We need some sort of an idea, a road map of what the future might hold. Most researchers agree that we can look ten years ahead in education with relative accuracy. After all we are dealing with people already born and with trends already in place. They will change slowly, if at all.

With these givens, what does the current research tell us? What does the future hold for us? We are living in a very unique period in educational history. In one word this uniqueness is predicated on Demographics.

A recent compilation by the Department of Education and research that I have conducted foretells the impact of an increasing number of young people in our schools and who in fullness of time will enter our colleges and universities.

We want to focus on community colleges and on opportunities that will exist in that segment of higher education. But to do that, we have to explore what is happening in K-12 for it will impact our community colleges

An Overview

The baby boom began in 1947. It roared in right after the low population years of the Great Depression and World War Two. Bu the time the boom ended in 1961, millions upon millions were born.

Last year, the United States broke the 25-year-old enrollment record that was set by the baby boom generation in 1971. This year we will break last year's record with enrollment rising to 52.2 million. That record will continue to be broken for many years to come.

Why is that? Why are enrollments rising?

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The current research presents FOUR reasons why enrollments are rising and will continue to rise. What are those FOUR reasons?

First: Most boomers married late, they delayed having children -- and then they all had children at the same time. Further many boomers, mostly men, have started new families; so a flood of children, sometimes called boomlets, have poured into our schools.

Second: There is a higher birth rate among most minority Americans in comparison to the mainstream American population. Further, minority Americans represent an increasing proportion of our nation's population; so an increasing number of minority children have been born and are in our schools. That's the good news.

The bad news is that among youngsters age 16 to 24 there is a high dropout rate -- 30% of all Hispanics in that age group have not finished high school, 20% of all African Americans haven't either. That compared to 10% for white youngsters. Until that turns around, people of color are not going to receive their proportionate piece of the American dream.

Third. Many recent immigrants came with children, many had more after arriving thus their children are in our educational system

Fourth. Our success, as a nation, in having a greater number of students stay in school has increased that population. So here is an unexpected price to pay for success. More students stay in school longer--that's the good news. The bad? It's expensive, many of our schools are superannuated and need repairs.

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So, what does this all mean? How will this impact education? How will it impact America's community colleges.?

As we look to the future, several valid issues jump out at us: Four to be exact.

First. We do not see any short term solutions for those school districts that face the long term reality of rising enrollments. Unlike the previous baby boom (1947-61), there will be no sharp decline in enrollments after 2007. Instead, the student population will simply plateau at a much higher level as the number of births stabilizes.

Second. In the last decade (1985-1997), our nation's elementary school faced the most pressure in terms of enrollment increases.

In 1997, that pattern changed. The decade long rise at the elementary school level has begun to taper off with enrollment projected to grow by less than one percent, from 37.8 million to 38 million.

In contrast, secondary school enrollment will increase dramatically. "Here come the teenagers" is -in many ways- an understatement. In the next ten years, 1.7 million young people will enter our high schools. California our most populous state, will see secondary school enrollment grow by 558,000 additional young people, an

increase of 35.3 percent.

There are many implications to this shift in enrollment patterns. High schools require more space and land and thus cost more to build than elementary schools. The average elementary school cost 6.3 million to build compared to 15.3 million for an average high school.

Unlike the recent past, there are going to be many jobs for high school teachers. And later on for many community college teachers. The current effort by states like California and New York to reduce class size will place an even greater demand on the teaching pool.

In addition high schools will need more guidance counselors, and the sheer number of teenagers will require this nation to re-double its efforts to help these young people stay away from drugs and other destructive practices.

Third, states are meeting the challenge of overcrowded schools with varying success. To address the problems related to rising enrollments, states are putting bond issues on voter ballots to support school construction, authorizing localities to raise their sales taxes, leasing portable and new facility space, and considering the extension of the school year.

In some states like Georgia, North Carolina and Arizona the public has recently passed bond issues.

In Alabama, in contrast, where there is overcrowding in suburban areas and school facilities are (on average) 30 to 40 years old, school-related bond issues and tax increases are rarely supported. Similarly, in Illinois, fewer than two percent of districts were successful in passing tax rate increases for capital improvements.

Fourth: Teacher shortages -- some examples: New York City and the Los Angeles Unified School District each reported needing to hire at least 3,000 teachers for the start of this school year. Las Vegas/Clark County School District in Nevada, the nation's fastest-growing district, needed to hire 1,400 teachers for the 1997-98 school year. The number of K-12 public and private classroom teacher is projected to rise from 2.99 million to 3.34 million between 1995 and 2007 -- a 12 percent increase.

The one-year increase from fall 1996 to fall 1997 is projected to be 42,000 teachers. While the number of elementary school teachers is expected to increase 5 percent between 1997-2007, to about 2 million, the number of secondary school teachers is projected to increase by 14 percent, from 1.2 to 1.4 million.

It is not a very encouraging picture for those schools. But it certainly is for those who want to teach in our high schools. And for those of you who will train and educate the new cadre of teachers.

Higher Education

We have already begun to see how all of this will impact higher education. In one word the impact is going to be dramatic and it will be felt at our community colleges.

First, university teachers will be called upon to train this enormous cadre of new teachers. Further provisional teachers will have to acquire more knowledge and improve their skills as well. Where will they go? -- they will go to our colleges and universities.

In 1900 only 20% of all Americans finished high school and less than a third of those went on to college.

Currently, 65 percent of all of our nation's high school graduates are attending college -- a new national record. The rising number of young people attending high school will eventually have a profound impact on this nation's system of higher education. In a few short years many more young high school graduates will be filling out applications for colleges, taking the SAT's and seeking student loans and other forms of financial assistance. Why?

Well, let us repeat, there will be a 21 percent increase in the number of full-time college students in the next ten years. We do not know of very many colleges and universities that are beginning to plan for that tidal wave. They better.

Part-time enrollment is projected to increase by only 6 percent. We believe that figure is low. But that's what the government projects. We think 6% is low because we think more students will have to work and thus not be able to go to college full-time. Working students are already the norm in community colleges and today nearly half of all students take more than four years to earn a bachelors degree.

Secondly, more adults will of necessity return to college on a part-time basis to upgrade their skills. We disagree with the government's projections. We think you will continue to see a lot of part-time students in college during your lifetime.

Washington. DC

You don't have to like President Clinton to acknowledge that he has been a defender, a protector of higher education. He has been particularly supportive of community colleges.

Ensuring access to America's system of higher education has been one of Cinton's chief goals. In the last twenty-five years, 75 percent of all student aid came from the federal government. The trend continues. Plans are in place to prepare for the growing number of full-time college students by increasing Pell Grants, creating the $1,500 Hope Scholarship program to benefit college freshmen and sophomores and therefore community colleges. Lastly Clinton proposed establishing a Lifetime Learning tax credit for juniors, seniors, and graduate students.

Therefore attending the first two years of college, especially community colleges will be possible for virtually every person in this country. But once again too many minorities are not finishing high school, too many have given up on education and thus are going to miss out. A strong back and a willingness to work will not be enough in the 21st century.

<u>A Word About America's Most Significant Population Cohort</u>
This year William Jefferson Clinton joined, not an exclusive club, but one that is

destined to grow to be the largest club in the world. One American joins Mr. Clinton every eight seconds. (We wonder who figured that out and how?!) Others in other countries join Clinton as well. Camilla Bowes Parker joined him a few months ago. But let's stay in this country.

As you have guessed by now, the Club is Boomers -- Baby Boomers -- who are turning 50. Baby Boomers, who began to change America as soon as they were born after the end of the Second World War, are turning 50. Boomers have always influenced our society. Their numbers were so enormous that they overwhelmed America. They changed America and thus the world forever. And their influence isn't over. Not by a long shot.

As mentioned before, many had children in their late 30's and some, mostly men, started a second set of children in their 40's and 50's. They will change your lives. These children, called by some, the Boomlet, are poised to impact our community colleges. They have been a large bulge going through America's education system. Like a large meal going through a snake we have already noted their impact on education.

What type of students will they turn out to be? How will colleges absorb them? How will you teach them?

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That population bulge which is going through our education system is but one demographic imperative that will affect higher education.

Another one is the aging of America. A few months ago, the U.S. Dept. of Education began talking about "two million, two million, two million." The government gave us formal notice that we will need 2 million new teachers, K-12, in the next 10 years. There are three reasons.

The first reason is there are a lot of children under the age of seven. As they enter our schools, more schools will have to be built and more teachers will have to be educated. And as we mentioned earlier, there will soon be a an enormous number of high school students.

Secondly, teaching, especially K-12 teaching, is a very stressful profession, up to 50% of all who enter teaching quit the profession within five years. 50% -- think of that. Teaching is very draining and very stressful. Those who have never taught don't know how difficult it really is. Bottom line: It is predicted that high turnover among teachers will continue. And therefore, jobs will become available again and again. And our colleges and universities will have to train new teachers over and over again.

But the third reason why Washington is getting into a dither is the BIGGEST reason why there are going to be so many teaching jobs over the next ten years. Once again, it is a demographic reality.

It's estimated that 60% to 75% of all teachers who are teaching today will retire in the next ten years. Let me repeat: nationwide 60 to 70% of all teachers who are teaching today will retire in the next ten years.

Clearly there are going to be a lot of jobs. California expects that 65% of their teachers and administrators will retire in eight years. Other states face a similar

situation.

How about Higher Education? Will demographics affect Higher Education?

Absolutely. The pattern is identical. Many colleges and universities expect a 70% turn over among faculty and administrators. Think of that a 70% turn over.

Seton Hall, I understand expects a 70% turn over and New Jersey projects a 75% turn over. What does this all mean? There is going to be an unprecedented number of opportunities for those of you who want to teach, who want to be administrators. All our research indicates an era of unprecedented opportunities for those of you who want to work in colleges and universities.

What else does our research tell us about higher education in the years ahead? In a few words: It's mixed. Let me explain.

First the good news. President Clinton is determined to impact education. It has become one of his top priorities. And Congress is on board as well. Clinton, a fellow who went to Georgetown University, Yale University and Oxford, rather elitist universities, has become a devotee and a vigorous supporter of Community Colleges.

He joins President Truman in helping that sector of Higher Education. Under legislation signed a few months ago, virtually everyone can receive financial assistance for the first two years of college. Although most colleges and universities will benefit from this new legislation, community colleges will certainly be the most significant beneficiaries. It is frankly the healthiest sector of higher education. They will be seeking hundreds of thousands of teachers nationwide.

New Community Colleges are still being built and many existing ones are building new campuses. There is growth there. Last year the Los Angeles Community College District advertised for 200 full time faculty positions. The avalanche is just beginning.

Clinton's frequent visits to community colleges and his unabashed support of them is helping to introduce and popularize community colleges.

Four year colleges and universities face a very different future. Intense competition, leap frog changes in technology, some public disillusionment and state governments being forced to cut their expenditures -- all spell a different higher education culture in the 21st century for those institutions..

Thousands of jobs will exist in community colleges. And you won't be bored. But "peaceful," "bucolic," "reflective" will not be the words used to describe the average community college or the lives of the people who work there. It is going to be a hectic, frantic frenetic lifestyle.

More community colleges are beginning to offer baccalaureate programs. Many believe that makes sense economically and will serve a student constituency who will not be served otherwise. The jury is still out on that trend.

Problems

There are a few problems that might impact these rosy predictions. More and more colleges and universities are hiring more and more part time teachers. Community colleges have not been an exception. In some areas they have been the leaders. The number of adjuncts has exploded at many institutions. Why? To save money, to float the budget.

In some community colleges over 50% of the courses are taught by adjuncts. In some, whenever a full time faculty member leaves, she is not replaced. Her position is chopped up --divided among adjuncts. And the colleges save over 50%. Many adjuncts are very competent--all are underpaid.

If colleges continue the trend there will not be so many full time jobs. But the numbers set to leave are so great, that we believe there will be many full-time jobs to go around.

There is another possible employment glitch for those who want to work in community colleges. For the past 25 years universities and colleges as we have just noted have hired many Adjuncts. Now that full time jobs will become available those adjuncts will expect to be hired. And rightfully so. Will they? Some will. For everyone hired you will lose an opportunity. But we still think the numbers are going to be so enormous that plenty of jobs will exist.

They will blossom forth in all fields although has as been true for so long "that the memory of man runneth not to the contrary," English and History teachers will have a lot of competition. I wish it wasn't so. For I personally, consider those disciplines extremely important. But science, mathematics and computer teachers will be in greater demand.

Another possibility is that some who are presently teaching will hang on for a few years beyond age 65. Why? -- for financial reasons, to retain their medical benefits, for lifestyle realities. But we think most will be glad to retire and relax. So those positions will become available with the passage of time.

Window of Opportunity

Those of you who want to enter the community college field have a narrow window of opportunity. The greatest need for new community college teachers and administrators will be in evidence for the next ten years. It is a narrow window. It is now opening -- and will remain open for about ten years. After that it will close for perhaps 25 years. Community college teachers do not move very often. Once hired, they stay. Finish your graduate degree and get that first job.

We wish you well.